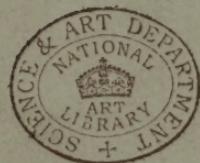


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THE LAY OF THE PALACE.

BY MRS. NAPIER.



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DEDICATED BY MRS. NAPIER

To her Sons,

CAPTAIN C. F. NAPIER

AND

LIEUTENANT COLONEL R. C. NAPIER.



1774. 1775. 1776. 1777.

1778.

1779. 1780. 1781.

1782. 1783. 1784. 1785.

THE LAY OF THE PALACE.

A PALACE! Let us think upon that name!
What does that chosen epithet proclaim?
So often given to a princely dwelling,
Above all habitations far excelling;
Where courts, and halls, and guards, and spies await:
The many mazes of a monarch's state!

Such have existed in the earliest ages,
Extolled or mourned in sacred history's pages;
Erected in the pride of wealth and glory.
How vain their boast! How sad their moral story!

Now the impervious eyrie, where has reigned
The man by neither law nor fear restrained,
The dread abode of Conqueror! Hero! King!
And mighty revels thro' the palace ring,
Till crime-struck by the avenging angel's wing.

Here was the monarch, wise and good, betrayed,
By the false minister his trust arrayed
In power supreme! whilst he, and he alone,
Approached familiar to the envied throne.

The sceptred Palace, envied, lost, and won,
Too often torn from the last monarch's son,
Is now the throne of the world's idol-god;
A Nero, at whose fatal frown or nod,

THE LAY OF THE PALACE.

The captive, or the boldly good, have bled ;
 Or where in jealousy the blood was shed
 Of the suspected partner of a bed,
 Seldom the couch of rest or mutual love,
 But where the eagle mated with the dove.

Say wealthy Babylon ! Say power of Rome !
 To what has your most wondrous glory come ?
 Let us not doubt impiety and crime
 Called down their doom in every age and clime.

And does idolatry not lingering glow
 In emblem images of holy show ?
 The crime has ever had the same pretence,
 And ever reaped the forfeit of the offence.
 No savage, not the dullest grossest mind
 That ever dwelt in form of human kind,
 Believed a stone was anything but stone,
 The image was for something all unknown.
 Forgetting God, or viciously perverse,
 The Emblem was adored, and nothing worse.

In modern times when men are gentler grown
 And Law is seated nearer to the throne,
 Is now the Palace shelter for the head
 Of silver age ? No ; fury thither sped,
 Tore virtue, beauty, pleading childhood thence,
 To prove that brutal force could vanquish sense—
 Or arms, or friends, or manly eloquence.

As nearer yet we come, what have we seen ?
 Have craft and polished falsehood slower been,
 To stir up treason, and the sceptre tear
 From chosen hand, bidding rude Riot wear

The Cap of Liberty ; whose crimsoned hand
Shall rend and harrow the affrighted land !

What would our sprightly neighbours ? We proclaim,
Alliance with full many a crested name ;
Their conquest, though it brought a collar-yoke,
Yet to the angel-savage wisdom spoke :
From them how many laws we still maintain ;
What would they now themselves, to what attain ?
A faultless government or king ? In vain :
Bright, vinous, sparkling, ever-changeful France !
Think not to work such miracle by chance,—
Nor seek for sober sense in wild poetic trance.
Time-grown experience is the steady rock
Of storm and flood to bear the tempest shock ;
Whilst fairest structure, built upon the sand
Of wild imagination, cannot stand.
The spider's faultless web in one night drawn,
Which glitters in the silver dew of morn,
Is fragile as the shadow of the sky,
Though woven strong enough to chain a fly :
The slightest storm, the fresh and balmy breeze
That crimsons vigorous health and nerves the trees,
Shall whirl the flimsy architecture down.
So broken laws succeed a violated crown !

And where indeed the Palace is the throne
Of Queen whose virtues every heart will own ;
Where England's Rose, in full and fair perfection,
Seems to proclaim Heaven's favour and protection,
Yet much of anxious thought and anxious care
Surround the Palace here, and every where.

But see ! a Palace open to the world !
Behold the many nations' flags unfurled !

THE LAY OF THE PALACE.

Pledges of peace to candidates for fame,
In every art and product we can name.

Was it a fairy queen inspired our prince
In this Transparent Palace to evince
Talent original, and vast, and true?
And judgment in the curious work to view
A far superior end, than wondrous! new!
Or curious! or beautiful! or grand!
No! as without a flaw we see it stand,
Its radiant face proclaims a radiant Mind.
It is a pledge of peace to all mankind;
And how exemplified I fain would say,
In this, perhaps presumptuous, Palace Lay.

Here comes a brother from a distant land,
To clasp in amity the skilful hand
Of brother artist in his work or trade,
Or curious invention,—every grade—
From simple fabric to the highest taste,
For homely use or decoration chaste.

Here jewels glitter for still brighter eyes;
Reflecting sunny beams and starry skies.
The careful master of the precious art
Displays his skill to charm the female heart:
The ocean's store and mountain's wealth are laid,
With practised eye combined, from shade to shade:
The pearl and amethyst together seen,
Are emblems of the spring,—for we have been
In the cool valley, where the violets meet
Their lily sisters, blending sweet with sweet:

The ruby king his royal consort finds
 Where queenly diamond the tiara binds ;
 The varied colours of the topaz vie
 In picturing the brightness of the sky
 Of sunny climes, where bedded they have slept,
 Cradled for ages, since the deluge swept
 Over their infancy : whilst there they fuse,
 And brighten to a thousand lovely hues.

Their classic neighbours stand not far away :
 What fables do the Parian statues say ?
 Here living marble kneels to weep and pray,
 There Psyche pleads ; and Cupid seems to play
 With his bent bow ; while from the feathered dart
 The passing beauty guards her virgin heart !

Pause, and admire the Children in the Wood,
 The oft-told story for the *Little-Good* ;
 Nor view without a smile the naughty boy
 Who cries (so like our own) for broken toy ;
 Nor yet old Jowler, who beneath his paw
 The serpent crushes, whose pestiferous jaw
 Was gaping for the trembling child, fast clasping
 The good dog's neck, while the dread foe lies gasping.

The carver's oak stands eminent in skill :
 We seem to hear the heroine pleading still ;
 And proud Elizabeth with angry brow,
 Listens to Amy's wrongs and Leicester's broken vow.

The foreign specimens of high-wrought work,
 In trappings stiff with gold, creese, poignard, dirk !
 Admiring, yet the mind is led to thought,
 That fettered hands the stubborn metal wrought,
 Whilst workmen in this free and dauntless land,
 Of master excellence, own no command

But this : to earn his daily bread by toil ;
 Whether in fields he turns the healthy soil,
 Or, harder far, he perfects the design,
 And hews the marble block, or works the mine,
 Still raises he his Class, till he can call
 The noble born to feast in decorated hall !

Here India's dark-eyed sons with wonder view
 The precious work, the splendid webs they drew,
 With skilful eye and never-wearied hand,
 Equalled, if not surpassed, at the command
 Of steam and wheel, flying from day to day
 In magic circle, and with magic sway.

Called are the distant ! welcome are the poor,
 To this great fair ! In England's Honour sure
 From fraud, or plot, or enmity concealed,
 By any in this wide commercial field
 Of competition. Hither come 'compare' ;
 In every product curiously rare,
 Inform or imitate, surpass us, such may be !
 In fabric, culture, or machinery.

Reflect upon the changes of this life,
 Too fleeting to be spent in war and strife.
 Invention is perhaps as yet a child ;
 For what was once considered vain and wild—
 The magic swiftness of the roaring steam—
 Is now familiar as the plough and team.

“ Farewell beloved son !” the mother cries :
 “ Months must creep on before these watchful eyes
 “ Shall read thy well-known characters, to tell
 “ Of thy arrival. Dearest, fare thee well !”

But now those footsteps on the sand imprest
By the fond lover, whose high throbbing breast
Has just been smitten with the mutual pain
Of lovers parting, that the cruel main
Shall haply never bring to meet again :
Those lingering footsteps on his native land,
Have hardly faded off the wavy sand,
Ere some returning messenger will bring
Glad tidings, borne on science' rapid wing.

Come hither, family of want and woe,
Whose bitter ills from superstition flow :
Widows whose faith is to be proved by fire,
The forfeit which unholy rites require !
The vain procession and the scented pyre !
False erring priest ! throw that rash brand away !
Nor dare the impious murder to the day,
Nor drive that faithful spirit from its frame
Which, for man's solace, on his slumber came.
Would'st thou take vengeance for the fall of man ?
In Eve if crime and sorrow first began,
Yet in the woman's promise man was blest,
She bore salvation on her gentle breast !

And thou, misguided parent ! lay thine head
In peaceful hope where weeping friends have spread
The decent pillow ; gasp not thy last breath
By sacred stream, but calmly meet thy death
In hopes of life eternal : duteous son !
Close those paternal eyes, and all is done.
And thou, great Ganges ! Disavow the cheat,
That thy cool wave is holy ; a deceit

Which like all falsities engenders ill.
Give faithful conduct to the mountain rill :
So may the sweetest streams thy wide arms fill !
Flow, mighty river ! bear upon thy breast
The foreign harvest and the learned guest.
Give way, ye rocks ! and let the rapid stride
Of knowledge, thro' your stony bosoms glide :
Fly to your dens ! ye ancient forest lords,
No heap of slain your prowling now rewards !
The lion's grasp is unrestricted power !
The lambs repose, the world's enlightened hour !
Ye mountain robbers, throw away the spear !
Hark, to the roaring engine rushing here :
Nor hill, nor torrent can impede its way ;
It scorns all distance in its mighty sway ;
With fearless hunger, swallowing everything,
Devours old time and mocks his ancient wing.
Each valley shall be filled, hill be brought low,
The trackless desert shall the stranger know,
And words of saving truth to utmost isles shall go !
Ye lofty hills, your glittering hoards unfold !
And commerce bear away the hidden gold,
Not for the molten idol, or rich altar,
Nor idol of the soul at which shrine falter
The thoughts of man. Gold closes up the heart ;
First of man's wily tempters Gold thou art—
Demon that leads to falsehood and to blood ;
Be honest, Slave ! and work for public good.
Yes, first of metals ! Fair and pliant slave !
No other than a favoured service crave ;
As such, attendant in the highest place,
Thy beauty every courtly scene shall grace.

What Flag ! what claim, my hapless Poland, comes
From thy deserted homes, and crowded tombs ?

A humble cap, or warrior trappings, wrought
By Polish peasant girl, a thing of naught—
A mere memento of your lovers parted
By cruel war, your maidens broken-hearted.
Await! await! and let adversity,
Thy noble nature ripen: wert thou free,
Wouldst thou bestow a generous liberty?
Unchain thy peasant, and a brother own
In humble-born? Thy lofty pride has sown
The bitter seed; and thou the chain hast found,
Which thy pride forged and on thy peasant bound!
Thy noble hands have vulgar toil endured;
Thy gentle wives, to humble fate inured,
Now wear humility, a woe-spun robe!
Fair beauteous Polanders! upon this globe
Now most oppressed! Remember poverty
So nobly borne is Christian dignity!
Patience, ye Beauteous! Haughty! Hapless! Grand!
God shall upraise your sorely-chastened land:
The Ruler's wealthy pledge—the sumptuous ware,
The gold, the damask, and the ivory rare—
Touch not the heart, nor admiration move,
As does the Polish maiden's work of love.

Come, ye remorseless tyrants, and believe
The fruits of gentle government; nor grieve
With whip and chain, and dungeon-horrors fell,
Your hapless subjects—making earth a hell,
And sowing bitter hate and vengeance deep
For generations yet unborn to reap.

Come, sober Persian, bowing to the sun,
As if in truth its daily course were run;
Itself beneficent—and king of light,
Bidding the morning blush and chasing night.

You, Persians, are too learned not to feel
 It is to God unseen you early kneel ;
 And tho' the Sun is beautifully grand,
 When first it beams upon the purple land—
 Though most poetic are your turban'd heads,
 On which that rising sun its glory sheds—
 It is idolatry to kneel and pray
 Before that servant of Eternal Day.

Come, Mandarin, of home celestial :
 Presumptuous title ! here your idols sell
 As baby toys : then raise those sleepy eyes
 To God alone, Creator great and wise,
 Who rules, directs, and governs earth and skies.

Perhaps the multitude who meet and talk
 Where side by side each rank presumes to walk,
 Where every language, every caste is free—
 This market of the world, perhaps may be
 Hither convened by a Divine decree ;
 Not by man's power and will alone contrived,
 But from a heaven-directed thought derived.

God works the greatest purpose and design
 By human means ; even evil deeds combine
 To ends unsought, surprising, only known
 To beings seated near th' Almighty throne.
 The moral seed of peace, promised by One
 Whose ways are not man's ways, though by man done
 The peace foretold in words of pitying love,
 By Him who spoke the hearts of stone to move ;
 Not understood, imagined, or conceived ;
 By those hard hearts unwillingly received.
 And when acknowledged by what measures brought
 To nations sunk in darkness, and how taught ?

With what Samarian pity did Mankind
The brother's wound (deep evil of the mind),
Kneel down to heal ? What oil and wine of love
Pour out, his Christian charity to prove !
How, where, and when was Christian creed first spoken ?
Spread far and wide, by what fraternal token ?

Too often was it written by the hand
Of persecution, stamped with burning brand !
How was the tender germ of truth refreshed ?
By blood ! with iron rack and wheel impressed,
When the mild tones of mercy on the ear
Had sunk in silence ! On the warlike spear
The Cross, the patient Cross, was rudely borne,
From land to land—in blood-red colours worn !
Did not proud Spain the banner Cross first bring
In search of gold, and from Peruvian king
Demand obedience to an unknown creed ?
Whilst every sinful and outrageous deed
Proclaimed the Christian his most cruel foe,
Filling a peaceful land with blood and woe !

One can but marvel, and reflect how curs'd,
Of many crimes that impious crime the worst,
By torture and authority to bind
The workings of the human heart and mind ;
When every precept that our Saviour spoke
Was said to lighten every human yoke.

The germ of peace—the balm to strife and hate—
May now be sown to flourish strong and great
From this small island ; to the world unknown,
In times which darkly to the past have flown—

Blotted from record, leaving but a wreck,
 Like a lone pyramid, a cloudy fleck !
 On faded memory, of things once done
 In days of yore when fables were begun
 And tales invented, by romantic pen,
 Of giant deeds performed by giant men.

But to my theme, the *Palace* ! ever grand,
 The Palace of all ages ! every land !
 This Crystal Palace boasts not rule nor power,
 Nor bids the stranger to its grandeur cower.
 It vaunts not treasure hoarded up for ages,
 The spoil of war, or crime's unrighteous wages.
 No, it arose by the directing hand
 Of genius ! placed in this unrivalled land,
 Free from the painful duty to condemn
 The many hapless culprits of the realm.
 The prudent friend and Consort of a Queen,
 Whose wisdom from the dawn of rule was seen.
 Nor does her generous kingdom fear to say
 Whence grew its wealth, freely to show the way ;
 Despising the poor feeling to conceal
 The threaded labyrinth of public weal !
 Doubting another England may become
 Greater than this. Alas ! alas ! the tomb
 For every mortal fabric is the fate,
 For every rich, and wise, and mighty state.

Yes ! hills shall melt, and oceans waste away,
 All but the soul of man must know decay.
 Yes ! the great promise given by the Word,
 The peace on earth long looked for but deferred—
 Perhaps delayed by the unhealthy mind
 Of earth's inhabitants, wilfully blind !—
 That promise cannot fail : cease earth and sea !
 But the Word lasts to all eternity !

Eternity ! how may we understand it ? Ever
 Seems lost in air ! yet faith must still endeavour
 To trust the parting soul to Him who gave
 His body's miracle to break the grave.
 The glimmering light by holy prophets seen,
 Renewed He ; heaven's path has been
 To mortals granted : spread then far and wide
 Knowledge : from pole to pole let science ride !
 And unity of purpose spread that creed,
 To which true knowledge shall imparting lead.

It seems as if this Consort of our Queen,
 Beloved perhaps as none before have been,
 Holds out a welcome to each art and science
 In noble confidence and kind reliance.
 With the bright hope his Heart his mind inspired
 To meditate upon the means required
 To bring mankind in peace from every land
 To hear and see, compare and understand ;
 What distance, caste, and prejudice concealed,
 Now open laid, and spoken and revealed !

No partial feeling gives the entry here :
 No favour rules, no flattery meets the ear !
 It is an universal fair, a bright display
 Of all and whatsoever treasures may
 From every nation, every realm, be brought,
 In works of man or nature's wonders sought
 By lives of study, and explained with skill,
 The heart and mind with deepest thought to fill.

Marvellous changes on this world have come !
 Resolving many doubts, confirming some ;
 Swift is the growth of little weeds, and things
 Of summer lives, and painted gauzy wings ;

But years must roll and many seasons flee
 To rear and spread the stately cedar tree !
 And who shall tell the age of northern whale
 Matured by time to meet the frozen gale ?
 So knowledge, the full portion we can know,
 If not by error blighted, still shall grow,
 To the wise purpose of Creator's will,
 A higher and more perfect state to fill.

Sad is the spirit long a prisoner left ;
 From what was sweetest, fondest, dearest reft !
 What feels the parted soul ! here so beloved !
 So far—O God, how very far—removed !
 Does it remember ties so sadly broken ?
 And may it whisper some consoling token ?
 Let me believe it ; 'tis a star to cheer
 The night of earth, whilst still we linger here.

But stop ! a hundred hands point out the time,
 And from harmonious bells I hear a chime
 Which warns me from this magic place to go ;
 Nor let confusion on my musings throw
 A weary veil.

Palace of peace ! Palace, whose sober brow
 In placid wisdom seems to speak—e'en now,
 Now that in silence resting we reflect
 On all thy wonders : none shall e'er forget
 What a calm lesson on the future thrown
 Is thy great union ! An example, shown
 Ever to be remembered !—Let me say
 The whole was perfect and shall lead the way
 To good beyond example ; for a charm
 Was on thy face, the coldest heart to warm.

You rose amidst the tumult and the strife,
 Which groaned and thundered—War ! War to the knife !

Thrones falling ! Empires trembling ! Kings debased,—
Their children scattered !—from their country chased.

But here all meet under the charm of peace,
Meet face to face, and hate and vengeance cease.
England has brought together foes !—and said—
“ Here in repose be angry passions laid ! ”

We saw the widowed and dethroned queen,
Beside the authors of her fate. Her mien
Was calm and patient !—On the future fate
Of mighty things she meditates : nor state,
Nor enmity, nor anger, neither hate,
Her calm eye shows ! the rebel-author by,
Whose plots and projects worked her misery.

The despot-chief here meets the exiled men
He banished,—ready to commence again
Their stand for freedom—yet no frown appears ;
They think of peace and hope for quiet years.
The charm is over them ! They are spell-bound :
And Christian ! Brother ! Whispered all around,
Discord and all her scorpion brood fall to the ground.
Play softly, organs ! Let the air have speech
And the sweet promise future ages reach.

And now a prayer sincere
For him whose genius brought such wonders here.

God kindly grant to Albert health and peace,
Whilst public and domestic good increase.
May he behold his children rise in mind
To wisdom turned ! their little hearts as kind
As is his own ! an honour to his name,
Which to remotest time this Palace shall proclaim !

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